P-L. Ston, Robert T. P-Wilson, ThomasW. J.

30c.4.01.2 Missil. Madnes

Origunder

The Great Weapons Heresy

By Thomas W. Wilson Jr. 275 pp. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. \$5.95.

Missile Madness

By Herbert Scoville and Robert Osborn. Illustrated. 77 pp. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. \$4.95.

Arms Beyond Doubt

The Tyranny of Weapons Technology. By Ralph E. Lapp.

210 pp. New York: Cowles Book Company. \$5.95.

By ROBERT JAY LIFTON

Preoccupied as we are these days either a very simple and gentle lib his "Lawrence and Oppenheimer," with little bombs, we tend to forget eral hero, self-effacing and misun came to view the bomb as our savior, that there are big ones around. And derstood, or as a passionate nuclear- as a force "that would shake manthat those big ones have a much ist consumed by neurosis and hubris, kind free from parochialism and more fundamental hold on us, have I believe that Oppenheimer shared war." Perhaps that illusion was necesindeed become a central object of and even exemplified our nuclear sary to a man in his position. In any worship in our time. We bring to disorder, and was then crucified by case a tragic fusion took place be-The Bomb, an entity both abstract true believers terrified and enraged tween Oppenheimer and the evil inand all too concrete, attitudes char- at having their deity questioned strument he so heroically and selfacteristic of those held toward a While he was immersed in nuclear-lessly guided into existence, a fusion deity. Awed by its destructive pow- ism, he was made a hero; and when that became profoundly unsettling er, we feel insignificant in relation- he began describing a vision beyond for him from the moment the bomb ship to it and view it as capable of nuclearism, he became a dishonored was dropped on Hiroshima. When he disqualify ourselves from raising It was Oppenheimer's tragedy to I suspect he was referring not only

liferation and absolute authority, and tion of the bomb. A man of protean to this internal man-bomb fusion in fact come to depend upon it both brilliance, a great synthesizer who to physicists having lived in a state for periodic miracles and everyday knew everything rather than one par- of nuclearism.

more recently, "History and Human sessed more than ordinary wisdom. one. Nor was he always in harmony Signijyal." of imperialism, the victorious people closely bound up with the bomb would create very swiftly a civiliza- without that experience Oppenheimer tion thousands of times higher than would have been merely a brilliant the capitalist system and a truly physicist with quiet charisma and beautiful future for themselves." one of the great teachers of his Given man's exposure for the first generation. At Los Alamos, however, time to an apocalyptic device of his own making, together with his strong impulse toward transcendence and his increasing disenchantment with traditional ways of satisfying that not work, and if not committed to impulse, it seems that the yearning

for nuclear grace is universal. we are obsessed with the me and just before the war, from pasdeeds of J. Robert Opping the deals with sense he has something lion against dropping the deals with the pro-Soviet leftism to a hardto reveal to us about our spiritual out warning on an unit

dimensional portrayals of him as Nucl Pharr Davis has claimed in

ticular thing (in Isaiah Berlin's terms, Thomas W. Wilson Jr., in "The This pseudo-religion-let us call it a fox rather than a hedgehog), Oppen- Great Weapons Heresy," flattens out nuclearism — is ubiquitous. The heimer made no original discover- the problem considerably by viewing French can equate hydrogen-bomb ies in physics commensurate with his Oppenheimer as a totally consistent possession with national grandeur; genius. His creative moment — his and prescient humanist, for whom it the Soviet nuclearists quest for the psychohistorical breakthrough—came was "as inevitable . . . [to] be drawn very biggest (100-megaton) weapon; at Los Alamos. More than just his to Washington in the postdawn of and the Chinese nuclearists claim that formidable intellect, he had an un- the nuclear age, as it was for him to canny impact upon people. Whether be drawn to Göttingen [a great and Dr. Lifton, professor of psychiatry or not he resembled a shaman, as free scientific center] in its predawn." at Yale, is the author of "Death in Haakon Chevalier has claimed, he Perhaps, but the question of what Life: Survivors of Hiroshima," and did have an aura of one who pos-drew him there was not a simple

undoubtedly Oppenheimer shared Szilard's humane aspirations. But he had a different involvement with the bomb. In addition to his nuclearist crisis be was also undergoing a complex political shift, which began

line anti-Coviet liberalism - a

vulnerability. But this potential in nize the depth of both his and our sight tends to be blunted by one problem. Perhaps Oppenheimer, as questions about its continuous pro- and his own realization in the crea- to the external evil of Hiroshima but

> colleagues - with Leo Szilard, for instance, who also made . that journey from Göttingen to Washington via Hiroshima but, unlike Oppenheimer, became a passionate opponent of developing nuclear weapons.

Yet his "supernatural" image was with his came entwined with the whole weapons project-motivated toward test-

To point out that he helped block We are obsessed with the life and the spread from Chicago to Los Ala-

ing the demon, anxious that it might

continued